

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Office of the Spokesperson

For Immediate Release

September 30, 2015

FACT SHEET

Uniting Against Threats to Cultural Heritage in Iraq and Syria

The terrorist group known as ISIL, or Daesh, is continuing its campaign of destruction and looting at historic sites in Iraq and Syria. These sites have been preserved for millennia in both Iraq and Syria, whose people are suffering enormous human hardships and losing cultural legacies of universal importance.

ISIL's damage and looting of historic sites in Syria and Iraq have not only destroyed irreplaceable evidence of ancient life and society but have also helped fund its reign of terror inside those countries. [Documents and items seized during a raid on the compound of ISIL Senior Leader Abu Sayyaf](#) provided further evidence that ISIL – beyond its terrorism, brutality, and destruction – also engages in a wide variety of criminal activity, including systematic looting and profiteering from the [illegal antiquities trafficking](#) under the direction of its senior leadership.

Working together with other nations and private organizations in the preservation of cultural heritage, the United States is committed to disrupting the illegal trafficking of antiquities, and proving that ISIL's tactics of murder and destruction will not erase Iraq and Syria's rich history and cultures.

The State Department is the largest contributor to the [American School of Oriental Research's Cultural Heritage Initiative](#) – providing over \$1.5 million since 2014 to document damage, promote global awareness, and plan emergency and post-war responses in Syria and Iraq. This [work is being placed online](#) as part of a global collaboration to halt the trade in conflict-region antiquities.

At a [program](#) yesterday at the Metropolitan Museum in New York, the State Department [announced](#) that its '[Rewards for Justice](#)' reward for up to \$5 million dollars for information leading to the significant disruption of the sale and/or trade of antiquities and oil by, for, on behalf of, or to benefit ISIL.

Working in partnership with the International Council of Museums, the State Department has funded the publication of notices to educate customs officials and legitimate art dealers, the [Emergency Red List of Iraqi Cultural Objects at Risk](#) and [The Emergency Red List of Syrian Cultural Objects at Risk](#).

The United States joins with the international community to urge all parties in Iraq and Syria and the international community to respect and protect archaeological, historic, religious, and cultural sites, including museums and archives, and reaffirm that all those who destroy important cultural property must be held accountable.